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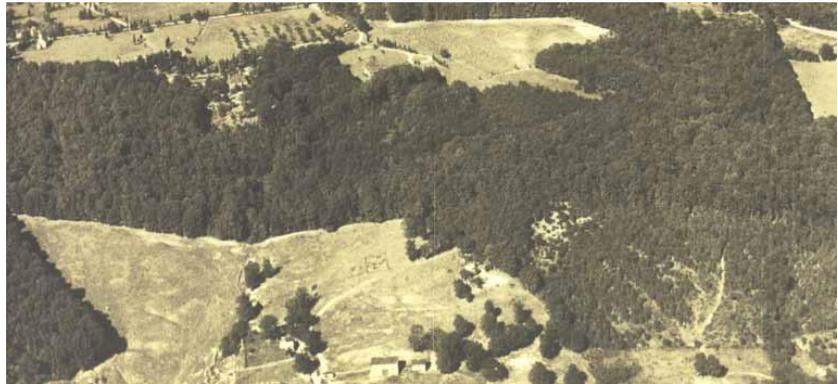
Out of the Attic

The evolution of Volusia from the Civil War into the 20th century

Alexandria Times, March 19, 2015

Image: Aerial view, ca. 1930. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.

Last week's article on Volusia, the home of Felix Richards and his family during the Civil War, contained a significant error that warrants correction here. The article described the old Richards home as being in the northwest corner of the 156-acre farm, when in fact the home and outbuildings were to the northeast section of the property, in the area of what is now North Howard and Imboden streets.



The home identified last week as the Richards residence was actually that of their immediate neighbor to the west, the Auld family, whose driveway paralleled the edges of Holmes Run and Spring Branch. In this aerial photograph found in the historical collections of Fort Ward Museum, taken around 1930, the Richards home can be seen clearly in the extreme lower center portion of the image, as a light-colored dwelling with a small icehouse to the right. A small tenant house is located just slightly to the northwest, and a barn, stable, corncrib and farm shed would have been located to the East, just out of view.

Before the Civil War, the section of land behind the main house was fenced and heavily forested, but the area was almost completely denuded by Union soldiers camped on the property during the war years. The leveling of trees at Volusia proceeded right to the property line, as evidenced by the sharp point at the northwest corner of the Richards lands.

One item of interest in the photograph is the small square of features located just beyond the main house on what appears to be a hilltop in an open field. Accessed from a pathway from the nearby tenant house, the size and shape of the anomaly suggests that it may be a cemetery with standing gravestones casting shadows on the surrounding terrain.

The image documents a remarkable view of what was then the rural character of eastern Fairfax County, an area that was annexed by the City of Alexandria in the early 1950s. In the upper right, Seminary Road slices through the corner of the photo, just south of the theological grounds that also were occupied by Union troops during the war. The site served as one of the best-run Union hospital facilities in Alexandria, and as the residence of Gen. George McClellan and his family just before the Peninsula Campaign.



Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

“Out of the Attic” is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as “Marking Time” and explored Alexandria’s history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into “Out of the Attic” and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.